



perfect Wedding guide

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BEST FOR THE
BIG DAY

WHO?
HOW?
WHEN?
A WEDDING
DAY GUIDE

**MODERN
CONFECTIONS**
ENHANCE WEDDINGS

A special publication of
THE BARRIE EXAMINER

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Countdown *to your wedding day*

Here's a wedding plan time-frame that should ensure that your wedding goes off as smoothly as possible.

10 to 12 Months Before

Announce your engagement and introduce your respective families. Since most reception halls and churches have busy wedding schedules, it is also important to book both as early as possible, preferably at least a year in advance of your wedding day. Start putting together a guest list around this time and ask your parents whom they'd like to invite as well. Also, sitting down and determining what you can spend, and developing a savings plan should be first and foremost.

6 to 9 Months Before

Start booking some services, such as a florist, caterer, a DJ/band, and a photographer. Also, this is a good time to inform any guests who will be traveling significant distances of the date of your wedding.

This is also a good time to order gowns for both the bride and bridesmaids, as some manufacturers require a few months to ship to bridal shops. You might want to ask someone such as your priest or rabbi to be the officiant of your wedding. Finally, book

your honeymoon around this time.

4 to 5 Months Before

Decide on wedding invitations. Start hunting for a wedding cake. Confirm that all of the bridesmaids have ordered their gowns and start looking for a tuxedo for the groom as well as the groomsmen. Purchase your wedding rings and let any other people you'd like to participate in your wedding (ushers, readers during the ceremony, etc.) know of your intentions.

2 to 3 Months Before

Finalize your guest list and mail out your invitations. If your guest list includes people who are spread out geographically, mail the invitations as close to 12 weeks in advance as possible. This is also a good time to finalize your menu choices for your guests, and find all your wedding accessories such as the ring pillow, candles, etc. Also, purchase gifts for those in the wedding party as well as the parents of the bride and groom. Just to be safe, confirm that all groomsmen have ordered their tuxedos and finalize all transportation plans.

1 to 2 Months Before

Schedule the first bridal-gown fitting. Also finalize the readings you'd prefer

during the ceremony and mail them out to anyone who has agreed to do a reading. If your family prefers to host a small gathering for close family and friends after the wedding rehearsal, the night before the wedding, this is a good time to make arrangements.

3 to 4 Weeks Before

Confirm your honeymoon arrangements and see if your wedding rings are ready. Get your marriage license and check the guest list to see who has and hasn't RSVP'd. Prepare and order your wedding program around this time.

1 to 2 Weeks Before

Get a final attendance count and submit it to the caterer, while also providing a final seating chart. Pick up the wedding gown and tuxedo. Make sure the wedding party picks up their attire. Also, finalize your vows and confirm all wedding-day details such as transportation, photo schedules, and addresses. And don't forget to pack for your honeymoon.

The Day Before

This is mainly when you rehearse for the ceremony and make any final confirmations you might have to make. Now get some sleep so you'll look good in your wedding photos.



Wedding *Expense Planner*

To alleviate problems and unpleasant surprises while coordinating your wedding, the Expense Planner will allow you to allocate a pre-determined amount of money for each expense once you have decided on a complete budget for the entire wedding celebration. As you plan your day you can see how close you come with the restrictions you have set for your budget.

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Misc. \$ _____

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Finding the Right reception hall

Weddings can be a very complicated endeavor to pull off. Far more than pulling on fancy clothes, strolling down the aisle and saying, “I do,” a successful wedding is a testament to a couple’s ability to plan and juggle multiple tasks.

One of the biggest tasks a couple must handle is choosing a reception hall. Since most couples choose a religious facility based on where they attend services or where they attended growing up, that decision is often

easier than choosing where the couple and their guests will go to let loose once the ceremony’s over. Couples facing the dilemma of where to host their post-wedding party should ask the following questions when on the hunt for a reception hall:

- When is the hall available? If you’ve already chosen a wedding date, this is obviously the most important question to ask. If you haven’t pinned down a date yet, perhaps a favorite hall’s availability can help you determine when to walk down the aisle. Just remember that many houses of worship frown on picking a date and booking with a reception hall without securing the ceremony first.

- How much? With the escalating costs of weddings these days, this should be the question you ask immediately after learning of the hall’s availability. It’s also good to have a number in mind with respect to how much you can spend on the reception.

It’s also wise to ask what’s included in the fee. Some halls, believe it or not, charge extra for tables, chairs and linens.

- What is the capacity? If your wedding party is going to be large, there’s no sense in driving to a locale that can’t accommodate larger crowds.



- What about the catering? Some reception halls insist customers use their kitchen staff, while others allow outside caterers to come in. Oftentimes, halls that require on-site staff do the cooking also require a minimum number of guests. In addition, those that permit private caterers might charge extra to allow kitchen usage to outside vendors.

- What service styles are available? Food and drinks can be served cocktail style, formal, or buffet style.

- How can drinks be served? The bar service can range from a full open bar (often the most expensive) to only certain drinks offered at the open bar (i.e., beer is open bar, mixed drinks cost guests per drink) to individuals paying for their own drinks all night, called a cash bar.

- How late is the reception hall open? Most reception halls will stay open until around midnight before informing guests

it's closing time. Some halls, however, might close earlier. Make sure it's spelled out in your contract.

- What is the refund policy? This can be an important question to ask in the unfortunate case an emergency arises and the wedding is moved or the couple calls off the wedding.

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Wedding Dress for Success: Stay True to Your Personal Style

For most brides-to-be, the choice of a dress is among the first and most important decisions in planning a wedding. With thousands of choices in every price range, finding the perfect wedding dress can be a difficult and time-consuming process. But by making some decisions before setting foot in a store, the search will be both easier and a whole lot more enjoyable.

First things first

Start by knowing your limits. To avoid disappointment down the line, determine the maximum amount that you can spend on a dress -- and don't forget to include all the little extras, such as undergarments, shoes, jewelry, veil, and/or hair ornaments. Next, take an inventory of your personal style. If you know that you're not comfortable in strapless or sleeveless dresses, for example, you can immediately eliminate these options. The trick is to rule out a few style options before hitting the magazines or stores and then be open to all other options.

Firm yet flexible

There will be no shortage of opinions -- from mothers, sisters, friends, and

store personnel -- about your choice of a wedding dress, but the decision, ultimately, is the bride's alone. A great strategy is to be open to suggestions about dresses to try on, but reserve the right to choose the look that feels right to you. With so many potential options, you might want to consider bringing along a camera and taking photos of yourself in the dresses that could be "contenders."

Go for a flattering fit

Remember: Your goal is to find a dress that flatters your body and expresses your personal style -- not to fit into a particular size. If you look ghostly in white, feel free to choose a creamier shade or a dress that has decorative accents of a different color near your neck, shoulders and face. Similarly, there's no rule that a wedding dress has to be floor-length. If you're planning a daytime or more casual wedding, you might want to consider a tea-length dress (one that falls a few inches above the ankle) or go even shorter.

Comfort is key

Style and fit may be the two most important factors in choosing a wedding dress, but comfort should



Brides often try on numerous dresses before choosing the one they'll wear on their walk down the aisle.

be a close third. Ask yourself if you will be comfortable in a particular dress given the setting in which your wedding will take place. For instance, if you've always dreamed of an outdoor wedding, you may want forego a dress with a long, trailing

train that could trip you up on your walk to or down the aisle. Even if you're planning an indoor event, having a dress and shoes that are as comfortable as they are beautiful will greatly increase your odds of enjoying your special day to the fullest.

Modern Confections Enhance Weddings

Tradition states that wedding cakes are to be tiered masterpieces featuring white cake and white frosting. However, today's modern couples are going in decidedly different directions with their wedding cakes. Often the dessert is as varied and unique as the couple themselves. Wedding cakes can be created to match couples' individual styles and tastes, as well as the color scheme of the wedding. Shapes and sizes can be mixed and matched depending upon what the bride and groom envision. Working closely with a skilled cake artist can yield a truly exceptional confection.

Here are some ideas for embellishing wedding cakes and making them mirror the personality of the wedding.

- * Consider a different shape other than standard round or square tiers. How about something that ties into your theme, such as a seashell or a sandcastle for a beachside wedding?

- * There are many decorating styles available and you may not have to go with the traditional buttercream icing. Rolled fondant can be cut and shaped into a variety of embellishments. Talk with the cake designer about his or her specialties in cake design, and ask to

see a look-book of past cakes created. Be sure the person whose work you are reviewing will be the actual person doing your cake.

- * Consider matching the flowers in bouquets and table settings on the cake. Skilled decorators can create sugar or piped flowers that rival the look of the real thing.

- * Base the cake on the style of the bride's wedding gown. A cake artist may be able to mimic the look of lace, beading, appliques and more. A photo



of the gown may be all the inspiration the professional needs.

* Who says you need to have vanilla? Today's cakes come in so many flavors, including chocolate fudge, banana, carrot, caramel, pumpkin, and so many more. Ask about the cake flavors

and filling offerings. Can't decide? Find out if you can have multiple flavors, where each tier is a different option.

* Save your appetite. Consider skipping the extensive dessert bar so guests can truly savor your cake. BR101975



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Look Your Best for the Big Day!

Wedding Weight Loss Tips

(MS) -- Getting married can be a huge motivating force for losing weight and shaping up. According to Janice Rassin, National Bridal Director at Meyer Corporation, U.S., "Today's Brides begin a transformation process 8 months before their wedding day. Their first step is starting a healthy eating plan followed by a new exercise regiment. Making your own meals at home is the easiest way to balance nutrition, manage portions and cut calories."

Weddings tend to have a similar effect on members of the bridal party, parents of the engaged couple, and guests. It's a joyous occasion when everyone dresses up and wants to make a great impression. So whether you're the happy bride, the maid of honor, the bride's mother or a dear friend, consider an upcoming wedding occasion a fabulous opportunity to look and feel your very best.

"Losing a few pounds has benefits beyond reducing a size," says Rassin. "Nutrients from fruits and vegetables improve the look of your skin and hair."

Here are some useful tips and strategies for wedding weight loss:

- * Set a realistic timeframe to reach your weight goal, understanding that slow and steady is preferable to fast and drastic drops in pounds. For most people, that means a weight loss of 1-2 pounds per week to avoid the counter-productive result of losing lean muscle tissue.

- * Choose an eating plan that is nutritionally sound and will provide

all the energy you need during this extraordinarily busy, and often stressful, period of planning a wedding. Avoid the temptation of fad diets, which tend to be unbalanced, restrictive and effective only in temporarily losing water weight, rather than excess fat.

- * Focus your attention on all the wonderful foods you can eat on a healthy weight loss program, rather than obsessing about the foods that should be avoided.

Fill up on nutrient-dense, fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as fiber-rich legumes.

- * Sign up for a cooking class, ideally with your fiancé, to hone your skills and knowledge about how to sear, sauté, poach, steam, grill, roast, and bake a myriad of different sweet and savory foods with healthy and delicious results. You'll have fun learning and mastering fundamental techniques and methods.

- * Register for high quality pots and pans. You'll have more confidence in the kitchen using well made cookware -- the number one bridal registry gift. Home cooking is essential to maintaining a healthy lifestyle, since you have complete control over a meal's ingredients and portion sizes. Cooking with nonstick cookware is one of the easiest ways to reduce fat calories from your meals. Choose durable, heavy gauge nonstick cookware, such as Infinite Circulon, which heats up evenly and allows you to make even the stickiest dishes, like scrambled eggs, with little or no added oil or butter.

Another one to try is new Circulon

Contempo hard-anodized nonstick cookware, featuring contemporary styling and innovative storage solutions. For example, a hinged loop on the handle allows you to hang the cookware on a display rack, or tuck in when storing in cabinets. Also, the cookware's well-designed lids slide neatly over the handles for additional space-saving convenience. Circulon, a long-established leader of high quality nonstick cookware, celebrates its 25th anniversary this year. For more information on Circulon cookware collections, anniversary promotions, as well as recipes and tips for healthy cooking, visit www.circulon.com.

* Enlist the help of a personal trainer to teach you how to exercise properly. Most personal trainers recommend a minimum of 2 one-hour long sessions a week, and sessions frequently combine core muscle strength-training, cardio and endurance exercises. It's a great way to learn the right moves, overcome any hesitancy about lifting weights, and make sure you're safely pushing yourself beyond your comfort zone for best results.

* If a personal trainer or gym membership isn't right for you, consider options on the Internet. There's a growing number of professionally designed Web diet and fitness programs geared to helping brides reach their fitness goals by their wedding day. Several dedicated sites provide a full range of useful tools you can tap with your fingers -- customized meal planner, customized fitness plan, recipe database, shopping list, food log, calorie calculator, activity calculator, journal, message boards, exercise DVDs, and more.

* Get a good night's sleep. Being tired makes it a lot harder to manage stress and focus on eating right. Health experts

generally advise on getting 7-8 hours of sleep every night. When you're well rested, it's much easier to exercise with gusto, and smartly choose an apple over a candy bar to power through the afternoon.

* Be mindful at each meal. The latest buzz in weight loss advice is becoming more conscious of what you eat, which leads to greater satisfaction and reduces the likelihood of over-eating. Eating slowly is key, as well as removing all distractions and "multi-tasking" behavior, such as watching TV, reading, working on the computer, etc.

* Find a reason to get physical. Unless your work involves a lot of physical action, you'll likely need to get creative in sneaking more opportunities to get up and move. At the office, stroll over to a colleague's desk to ask a question instead of e-mailing. Walk or bike to run errands in the neighborhood. Take the stairs instead of the elevator in buildings when feasible. Catch up with friends over a walk in the park. Clean out an attic or garage. Even bake a loaf of bread -- kneading by hand is a great work out for your arms!



Floral 411

for the Big Day

Leading up to their big day, couples have lots to worry about before they finally get to walk down the aisle as man and wife. The trials and tribulations of planning a wedding is no small task, as even the most minor details must be accounted for.

Such is the case with the floral arrangements. Though not a minor detail in any way, preparing a wedding day floral arrangement does have its minor details, particularly when it

comes to the more individual aspects of a floral plan. For instance, the following components must be considered when devising a floral plan.

- * The bridal bouquet. It's tradition for bridal bouquets to contain white or cream-colored flowers such as stephanotis, roses, orchids, or lilies. Many bridal bouquets also include fillers like baby's breath as well as some green or ivy, as well as ribbons or additional accessories.



* Bouquets for attendants. Attendants' bouquets should be identical, and it's best to coordinate these bouquets with the attendants' gowns. Only the maid of honor traditionally receives a slightly different bouquet, as it's customary to give her one apart from the rest, though not significantly so.

* Boutonnieres for groomsmen and ushers. The guy's side of the wedding also needs to take part in the floral plan. Worn in a buttonhole or lapel, a boutonniere should be worn on the left lapel and match a flower from the bridesmaids' bouquet. The groom should also wear a boutonniere, though his should match a flower from the bride's bouquet. When

wearing boutonnieres, men should not wear additional accessories such as pocket squares.

* Flowers for special guests. Certain special guests, such as grandmothers and mothers, should receive corsages. While the corsages do not need to be identical, they should match the bridesmaids' bouquets. It's best to consult with a florist for a corsage color that matches all dresses, as typically the corsages must be ordered before the bride and groom know what their mothers, grandmothers and other special guests will be wearing. A corsage that goes with anything, therefore, is ideal. BR101982

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Skin care

Seek your best

(MS) — You bought the gown, scheduled the hairstylist, and picked out the bridal accessories. But are you forgetting about one of the most important parts of looking beautiful on your wedding day: your face?

Every bride wants to shine on her wedding day, but she probably doesn't want her skin to shine, too. "One of the best ways to put your best face forward is to know your skin type, what causes you to breakout, and to avoid any products or foods that may contribute to the problem — at least until the last wedding photo has been snapped," says Brooke Tilson, a Toronto makeup artist. If you don't know the answers to these questions, you may want to visit a dermatologist a few months before the wedding to get recommendations for proper skin care.

Here are some other ways to maximize your beauty potential come your wedding day.

Cleansing and Toning

Healthy skin starts with clean skin. Be sure to remove makeup every night and wash your face with a mild cleanser appropriate for your skin type twice daily. Toners can refresh the skin, dry up any extra oil on the surface and clean out pores. Now is

not the time to experiment with the latest and greatest products out there. You don't want to risk irritation to your skin before your wedding day.

Be Gentle

When cleansing, drying, or even applying makeup, treat your skin with a soft hand. Blot gently with cotton balls or swabs, and avoid tugging or rubbing the skin. Not only can this cause redness or irritation, it may also contribute to long-term wrinkling.

Not So 'Sun'sational

Many brides-to-be believe that suntanning will cure many of their skin ailments. This isn't the case. While sunbathing may temporarily alleviate acne or breakouts, it could actually compound the problem and make outbreaks worse over time. Others think tanned skin will make them look better against their white bridal gown. However, on your wedding day you should look like the best version of you, not a complete stranger.

Fair-skinned individuals may look out of place with a deep tan. Err on the side of moderate whenever contemplating modifying your skin tone, as it will affect makeup choices and other things as well. And avoid

tanning booths or sitting out in the sun.

Makeup

Conservative, natural-looking makeup should also be the rule. The photographs you take on your wedding day will be a testament to the era and moments you shared. But you don't want to look dated when you reminisce years later. Choose muted shades on eyes, lips and cheeks that enhance, rather than cover up your beauty. Select makeup that is smudge- and waterproof so it will stand up to tears of joy and kisses from well-wishers. Pressed or loose powder can also be your best friend. It will come in handy when you have to touch up spots on your face or combat shine.



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Responsibilities of the Wedding Party

As weddings have become less regimented and more expensive, the traditional bridal party is often pared down to a best man and a bridesmaid or two. Their roles, however, have remained constant through the years. Whether the wedding you've got in mind is large or small, formal or casual, conventional or original, it's helpful to have a sense of the roles that bridal party members have played through the years.

* ***Maid of Honor*** -- Usually the closest friend of the bride and sometimes a relative. A married, divorced, widowed, or older woman might be called the matron of honor. She assists with the details of the wedding plans, like shopping for the bridal gown, addressing invitations and choosing flowers. She arranges the bridal shower in conjunction with the bride's family, is in charge of coordinating the bridesmaids and organizing fittings, and typically signs the couple's certificate of marriage or wedding license as a legal witness. At the reception, she should

stand immediately after the groom in the receiving line.

* ***Best Man*** -- Commonly the groom's best friend, relative or not, the best man is in charge of instructing the ushers and coordinating the groom's transportation to the ceremony. He usually holds the rings until the ceremony and will also sign the marriage certificate as a legal witness. At the reception, he holds a place of honor, escorting the maid of honor in the receiving line and in all other wedding party activities. He's also the toastmaster, offering the first toast to the couple.

* ***Bridesmaids and Ushers*** -- Typically friends or relatives of the bride, bridesmaids may be asked to coordinate special details during the ceremony preparations or at the reception, and assist the bride and the maid of honor. Ushers (sometimes also known as groomsmen) should be prepared for an early arrival at the ceremony to escort female guests to their seats. During the ceremony, they will escort the brides-



Wedding party participants have more responsibilities than simply enjoying a celebratory drink with the new bride or groom.

maids down the aisle. They may also be asked to coordinate the guests' trip from the ceremony to the reception as well as assist the groom and the best man.

* ***Flower Girl and Ring Bearer*** -- The flower girl carries a basket of flower petals to sprinkle down the aisle, or flowers to be passed out to the women seated near the aisle. The ring bearer may either escort the flower girl down the aisle, or follow her, with the rings on a pillow.

* ***Father of the Bride*** -- His most conspicuous duty is giving away the bride at the ceremony. He might also fulfill numerous rolls, such as coordinating transportation, dancing and toasting. Traditionally, he and the mother of the bride have paid for the wedding and reception but today it is common for expenses to be shared by both families along with the bride and groom themselves.

Tips for a Toast to Remember

Being asked to be someone's best man or maid of honor is an honor to be cherished. Often the best friend of the groom or bride, the best man and maid of honor often want to reciprocate the honor of their role with a toast that illustrates just how much they care for the bride or groom. But once the time comes to sit down and think about their toast, the best man or maid of honor are often in the dark. Giving a wedding toast, after all, is not an everyday event, and for many people it will be a one-time experience, if they're even asked at all. Though a certain amount of pressure comes with the responsibility of giving a toast, keeping a few ideas in mind when writing a toast will make the process go more smoothly.

* Thank the guests. Thanking the guests for attending is a good way to break the ice. Be sure to thank the hosts as well.

Traditionally, the hosts are the bride's parents. However, thanks to the escalating costs of weddings, many are now financed by both the bride and groom's



The wedding toast is an important responsibility, but one that isn't as scary as it might seem to those who have never delivered one.

parents, and oftentimes by the bride and groom themselves.

Therefore, you can avoid any missteps and simply thank the parents of the bride and groom after thanking the guests for joining in the festivities.

* **Introduce yourself.** While the bride and groom certainly know who you are, chances are many of the guests do not. Many weddings boast guest lists with more than 100 people, so introduce yourself at the beginning of your toast. When doing so, you can explain your relationship to the bride or groom (i.e., older/younger sibling, college roommate, etc.).

* **Keep things light.** While jokes should remain appropriate (every wedding has kids in attendance), keeping the toast jovial is a good way to keep the festive mood of the day going. While it's important to get across how much you cherish being the best man or maid of honor, a jovial approach to doing so will be enjoyed by all, and

your message will still come across to the bride and groom as well.

* **Add an anecdote.** The best man or maid of honor no doubt have many funny anecdotes to tell about the bride or groom. Add a light-hearted anecdote that illustrates your relationship to the bride or groom and how much they mean to you. An older brother, for instance, might tell a tale of the innocent joking around brothers do, while a younger sister might spin a funny yarn about how she once used all of her older sister's makeup. Just make sure the anecdote is appropriate for everyone in the audience.

* **Raise a glass, but do so after the toast, and not before.** While everyone knows to raise a glass at the end of the toast, some best men or maids of honor raise one too many glasses before it's time to give their toast. Don't drink to excess before it's time for you to give your toast, or you'll risk being the talk of the reception for all the wrong reasons.

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THE BARRIE EXAMINER

Hairstyles

Keep your personality



On your wedding day, you want to look your best. Make your first appointment with your hairdresser about three months in advance, to plan hair care and begin to select the hairstyle for your wedding. It's important to establish a relationship of trust with your hairdresser so you feel comfortable explaining your needs and tastes. Your hairdresser will begin by doing a complete analysis of your hair. This way, any special care needs can be determined.

Then you can get advice about specific treatments for your hair. This will give you the best care to make your hair shiny and radiant. It's not a good idea to completely change your appearance on your wedding day. It's better to enhance your natural beauty. You can get a



little imaginative or choose a trendy style without betraying your true nature. Your hairdresser will know just what's needed for lightness and movement so your hair has volume without being heavy. He or she knows which styling products will give softness and hold, without sticky residue. You can colour your hair, if that's what you usually do.

Even with your natural colour, you can still add colouring effects that will brighten your hair. Bring your veil or headpiece and a photo of your gown so that your hairdresser can determine the hairstyle that will go best with your outfit and the occasion, while respecting your personality.



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hairstyle for
your wedding
that you've
always
dreamed of!

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...and, if possible, would like to schedule a styling and hair consult to their new Rush Hair Studio in hair & aesthetics, so every competitive styling will be offered.

At RUSH Hair Studio & Spa we realize that your hair is your signature & that you feel great about it every day.

The success of our business will be based on paying attention to the details & ensuring we meet & exceed your expectations on an on-going basis.

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RUSH is a full service hair and spa establishment offering manicures, pedicures, waxing and massage in addition to cutting-edge hair styling & color.

As a client you will experience the "Intervention of RUSH" during each and every visit.



On behalf of RUSH Hair Studio & Spa, Lorraine Votano and Jacqueline Mallon would like to welcome senior stylists and great additions to the RUSH team.

Ivo Tiberio 24 years experience, and Jillian Andrews Senior Esthetician.



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Make your wedding Stand out in a crowd

Did you know that according to the latest findings, 2.4 million weddings occur annually? That's a lot of bouquet tossing and wedding band renditions of "The Wind Beneath my Wings" to sit through. It's no wonder most brides want their ceremony and reception to be different. Maybe you're inspired by the lavish celebrity affairs, many of whom fly entourages to exotic locales like Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes did last year in Italy, or clean out florists' supplies of an entire species of flower all in the effort to be different. Celebrities have the bankrolls to do so. But you, too, can have a custom affair with an average wedding budget. So apart from choosing personal wedding songs and outlandish bridesmaids' gowns, what can you do to be unique? Plenty.

1. On Location: Change the setting of the wedding. Think beyond the local reception hall. Investigate a park, theater, museum or even a

building rooftop. You may be able to get these venues for a steal. Also, destination weddings are growing in popularity. Your destination can be a Caribbean island, the San Francisco Bay or a European castle.

2. Break the rules: Okay, so there really aren't hard-set rules in weddings, except for those that your house of worship may require. Still, people become accustomed to certain traditions. Go against the norm. If the groom wants a female "best man" that's his prerogative. If the bride wants to ditch the white gown and wear a drop-dead-gorgeous red dress, she certainly has the right. The first dance at the reception doesn't have to be a sappy love song. Choose an up-tempo number or your favorite rock hit. It's a celebration after all.

3. Personalize stationery: Couples can show their personalities through the stationery they choose — from quirky save-the-date fridge magnets to thank you notes that



all form a cohesive theme. A well-designed invitation set not only establishes the mood of the event, it also informs guests of what to do and when. Learn more at www.checkernet.com.

4. *Take the cake:* Instead of a tiered wedding cake go for a custom creation. If you've ever tuned into the Food Network you know that cakes can be designed in all shapes and

sizes. Or maybe you prefer something even more unique? Whether a series of individual cupcakes, gourmet brownies or your favorite pie, allow your preferences to set the scene instead of feeling the need to conform.

5. *Free DIY favors:* Guests look forward to taking home a memento from the wedding. But usually it's just something that ends up collecting dust on a shelf. Who likes those Jordon almonds anyway? For intimate weddings, such as destination

wedding affairs where the guest list may be considerably smaller, you can personalize favors for each couple that attends the event. Offer a sweet sentiment and words of thanks for their attendance. Blue Moon has a series of matching wedding favors that you can print out for free on a home computer and assemble yourself at www.checkernet.com/favors.

The honeymoon

A little one-on-one

After months of planning and saving for a wedding, a honeymoon offers one-on-one time for the couple to have fun, develop a deeper relationship, and enjoy some much needed rest and relaxation. Among couples who enjoy a traditional wedding, statistics say that 99 percent take a honeymoon. The average honeymoon costs approximately \$5,000. Since a honeymoon will account for at least 14 percent of the total wedding budget, couples want to ensure that theirs is money well spent – especially in an economy where every penny counts. Preparation is the key to honeymoon success.

“Working with travel professionals that specialize in honeymoon and destination wedding planning can help ensure couples have a memorable honeymoon,” says Scott Ellingboe, of www.thehoneymoon.com, an online honeymoon planning resource with a honeymoon gift registry service and a nationwide network of independent, experienced travel agents. “Whether you’re a do-it-yourselfer or use a travel expert, you’ll enjoy browsing the honeymoon package and resort listings and reading the entertaining and informative stories in our multi-media digital magazine.”

Additional tips provided are:

- ***Enjoy clear skies or bottomless blue water:*** Timing plays a large role in honeymoon travel. It’s important to research the average weather conditions for prospective honeymoon locales during the month you’ll be traveling as



well as any events that may take place at that time. This way you book your honeymoon during an optimal time for the best weather conditions.

- **Save money:** Putting honeymoon plans into the hands of an expert could add up to considerable savings. "Travel agents have relationships with tour and package providers that they can leverage in ways the average consumer cannot," offers Ellingboe.

- **Honeymoon registry:** Not just for budget-conscious brides- and grooms-to-be, consider creating a honeymoon registry to give your wedding guests an alternative to crock pots, toasters and blenders.

- **Pack a variety of clothing options:** Bring a few different outfits of varying levels of formality so that you'll have options on your trip. Depending upon the resort or ship, there may be specific dress codes at certain restaurants or meal times; you don't want to be caught off-guard.

- **Read reviews:** There's a reason review sites are so popular – they help people make better, more informed decisions. Advertising gives you one perspective, reviews give you another. Make sure that you read reviews of the places you are considering for your honeymoon so that you get a variety of viewpoints.



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Who? How? When?

A wedding Q and A

Q - When should the engagement be announced, and by whom?

A - The announcement should be made public by the brides' parents as soon after the fact as possible.

Q - Who gives a bridal shower?

A - Showers can be given by anyone, but are usually from best friends, sisters, or new sisters-in-law.

Q - What is a stag and doe party?

A - Basically, it's a combination of, or perhaps an elimination of, the shower and the stag. It's a mixed party of gift giving, dancing and merriment.

Q - Is it offensive not to attend a stag?

A - No. It's offensive not to buy a ticket. Today stags are generally a fund raiser with funds given to the groom at the end of the night

Q - This is my second marriage.

Should I accept an offer for someone to have a shower for me?

A - Certainly. No question about it.

Q - Who sits where in the church?

A - The bride's family sits on the left side, while the groom's family takes the right. Friends sit on either side. It's the responsibility of the ushers to do the balancing.

Q - Is it okay for the bride to wear white at her second marriage?

A - Today's second marriages say, "Go for it!"

Q - Who drives the cars in the wedding?

A - Limousines are usually chauffeur

driven. In their absence, the father of the bride, or someone from the bride's family drives to the ceremony; and the bestman, or one of the ushers does the honors thereafter.

Q - Should an "EX" come to the church ceremony?

A - Not in a million years. Even longer for the reception.

Q - Where do the remarried parents of the bride or groom sit?

A - Not all together. In the case of divorced and remarried parents never seat the former couple together. It just makes everyone completely uncomfortable. Instead seat them separately and be glad they both came.

Q - What does the bride do with her bouquet at the reception?

A - Most bridesmaid's bouquets will lay on the table, as with the bride's, unless the shape is a cascade or crescent type. A special holder is available from the florist if needed.

Q - Why are toasts given?

A - Apart from tradition, toasts are a way of loosening the tension and introducing the rest of the guests to the important relatives.

Q - What time does the reception usually end?

A - The reception officially ends after the bride and groom leave. However, barstenders and disc jockeys have been known to keep working, into the wee hours.



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